

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4183

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 1744

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, PK

SUBJECT: INDO-PAK RELATIONS

REF: NEW DELHI 2341

1. MEA JOINT SECRETARY CHIB'S RELATIVELY UPBEAT VIEW THAT INDO-PAKISTAN RELATIONS HAVE BEGIN TO TURN UPWARD SLOWLY AND THAT THERE MIGHT BE FURTHER IMPROVEMENT OVER THE NEXT SIX MONTHS IS NOT SHARED BY HIS OPPOSITE NUMBERS AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HERE. IN DISCUSSIONS LAST WEEK WITH POL COUNSELOR AND VISITING NEA/INS DIRECTOR DENNIS KUX, DIRECTOR GENERAL (SOUTH ASIA) HAYAT MEHDI AND DIRECTOR (INDIA) ZAFAR HILALY AGAIN STATED THAT THEY SAW NO INDICATION THAT ANY SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN THE SIMLA PROCESS, NOW STALLED, WOULD BE RESUMED IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. THE THRUST OF THEIR ASSESSMENT WAS THAT THEREHAD BEEN A REVERSAL OF ROLES. EARLIER GOI WILLINGNESS TO PROCEED TOWARD NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS AT A PACE LARGELY DETERMINED BY PAKISTAN HAD GIVEN WAY TO DELIBERATE INDIAN STONEWALLING. AS THEY HAD
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IN EARLIER DISCUSSIONS WITH EMBOFFS, THE MFA OFFICERS ATTRIBUTED THE CHANGE IN THE GOI'S ATTITUDE TO THE

NEW EQUATIONS IN BANGLADESH'S RELATIONS WITH INDIA
AND PAKISTAN PROMPTED BY 1975 DEVELOPMENTS IN DACCA
AND TO INDIA'S OWN DOMESTIC CONCERNS.

2. THE MFA OFFICIALS MAINTAIN THAT THE GOP CONTINUES TO
BE FORTHCOMING. THEY CITE ITS WILLINGNESS TO
DISCUSS WITH THE INDIANS THEIR MARITIME BOUNDARY IN
THE ARABIAN SEA. (THE WAY THEY PUT THIS TO US IS THAT
THE GOP INITIATED THESE DISCUSSIONS, NOT THE GOI,
AS REPORTED IN NEW DELHI 2341.) THEY CLAIM THAT THEY
ARE RESPONDING RESPONSIBLY TO INDIAN COMPLAINTS ABOUT
ALLEGED PAKISTAN PROPAGANDA, NOTING AS EVIDENCE THAT
THEY APOLOGIZED TO THE GOI FOR AN INCORRECT REPORT
ON MRS. GHANDI WRITTEN BY A PAK JOURNALIST. THEY POINT
OUT THAT THEY MAKE EFFORTS TO DISCOURAGE REPORTING IN
THE PAK PRESS OF PROVOCATIVE STATEMENTS MADE BY INDIAN
LEADERS: THEY GIVE REMARKS MADE BY INDIAN DEFENSE
MINISTER BANSI LAL ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IN MID-JANUARY
AS EXAMPLES. BUT THEY ADD THAT THEY CANNOT STOP
THE PUBLICATION IN THE PAK PRESS OF REPORTS CRITICAL
OF INDIA WHICH ORIGINATE IN FOREIGN MEDIA.

3. OUR MFA CONTACTS ARE SOMEWHAT SHAMEFACED ABOUT
WHAT THEY ACKNOWLEDGE IS THE PALTRY AMOUNT OF IMPORTS
THEY AGREED IN JANUARY TO TAKE FROM THE INDIANS. THEY
EXPLAIN THEIR PROBLEMS IN THIS AREA AT LENGTH, AND
SAY THEY HOPE TO DO BETTER. IN THIS CONNECTION,
MEHDI REPORTED IN CONFIDENCE THAT THE PAKS ARE GIVING
CAREFUL AND URGENT CONSIDERATION TO PROPOSING A
REOPENING OF THE WAGAH-ATARI RAIL LINK BETWEEN LAHORE
AND AMRITSAR, TORN UP SINCE THE 1965 WAR. RESTORATION
OF FREIGHT SERVICE ON THIS LINE, HE SAID, COULD MAKE
INDIAN PRODUCTS SUCH AS COAL MORE COMPETITIVE IN
PAKISTAN AND HELP CORRECT THE TRADE IMBALANCE BETWEEN
THE TWO COUNTRIES. HE SUGGESTED THAT A PROPOSAL TO
THE INDIANS MIGHT SOON BE FORTHCOMING.

4. MEHDI ALSO STATED THAT THE PAKS HAD RENEWED THEIR
INVITATION TO FOREIGN SECRETARY KEWAL SINGH TO COME
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TO PAKISTAN FOR TALKS. (GIVEN THE ATTITUDE OF BOTH
SIDES THAT SUCH TALKS SHOULD NOT BE HELD BEFORE
AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE CAN BE REACHED ON THE STALLED
CIVIL AIR NEGOTIATIONS--THERE IS NO SIGN OF THIS--
IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE GOP EXPECTED THE INDIANS TO
ACCEPT THE INVITATION. IT WAS ISSUED BEFORE WORD
OF THE IMPENDING CHANGE IN GOI FOREIGN SECRETARY
REACHED HERE.) ON SALAL, HE SAID THAT THE PAKS
WERE STILL AWAITING A REPLY FROM THE INDIANS ON A
PROPOSED DATE FOR A FORMAL MEETING OF THE INDUS

WATERS COMMISSION, INSISTED UPON BY THE GOI AS A NECESSARY FIRST STEP IN THE TREATY PROVISION FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEUTRAL EXPERT TO RULE ON DISPUTES.

5. MFA APPEARS PREPARED IN ANY EVENT TO WAIT IT OUT, WHILE MAINTAINING WHAT IT REGARDS AS A CONCILIATORY POSTURE. MEHDI AND OTHERS DO NOT HAZARD GUESSES AS TO HOW LONG IT MAY BE BEFORE, AS THEY SEE IT, THE DUST HAS SUFFICIENTLY SETTLED IN BANGLADESH AND IN INDIAN DOMESTIC POLITICS TO ALLOW THE GOI TO AGREE TO RESUME PROGRESS. THEY DO NOT SEEM IN ANY HURRY THEMSELVES, AND ALTHOUGH THEY OCCASIONALLY DROP WORD THAT THE PRESENT IMPASSE COULD LEAD TO A DETERIORATION IN RELATIONS THEIR BASIC ASSESSMENT SEEMS TO US TO BE THAT THEY CAN LIVE WITH IT FOR SOME TIME.
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